



## News Release

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# Department of Forensic Science to purchase property in Hanover County

*~ DFS and OCME to relocate central facilities to Mechanicsville ~*

**Richmond, VA** – The Department of Forensic Science (DFS) announced today that it has executed a contract to purchase 24.8 acres in Hanover County to construct a new Central Forensic Laboratory and Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) facility. Current DFS and OCME facilities are co-located in Manassas, Norfolk, Richmond and Roanoke.

DFS expects to close on the property, located off Times Dispatch Boulevard in Mechanicsville, later this year. Once the closure occurs, DFS and OCME will work with the Department of General Services to complete programming for and design of a new approximately 283,000-square-foot facility.

“Demand for forensic services has grown over the years, which requires more scientific and administrative staff, as well as additional instrumentation and equipment. This project will allow regional DFS operations to be housed in one facility that has space for future expansion,” said DFS Director Linda Jackson.

DFS and OCME moved into the current facility in 1998. Since 2008, DFS and OCME have leased approximately 25,000 square feet in an adjacent facility in order to have enough space for both agencies to house its scientific and administrative operations. These combined spaces are no longer sufficient for the agencies to operate efficiently and meet the needs of the Commonwealth.

DFS and OCME planned to renovate and expand their current facilities in downtown Richmond, but inefficiencies discovered during the initial design phase made constructing a new facility more cost-effective. In 2018, DFS was authorized to proceed with the expansion and renovation or construct a new Central Forensic Laboratory and OCME central district office elsewhere.

DGS solicited proposals to purchase land for the new DFS facility from the greater Richmond region and received 16 responses. DFS reviewed the responses to see which would most effectively meet its needs.

The selected property is located approximately 10 miles from the current DFS/OCME shared facility and is close to interstate highways for easy customer access. Construction is expected to begin in 2021 and be completed in 2024.

“This new facility will allow the OCME to continue to be a model medical examiner system in the United States by providing space for the latest technology and additional needed personnel. We will also be better prepared to respond to public health crises and mass fatalities; therefore, allowing us to provide more efficient and effective death investigation services to the citizens of the Commonwealth,” said William T. Gormley, MD, Virginia’s Chief Medical Examiner.

The Department of Forensic Science (DFS) is a nationally accredited forensic laboratory system, established by Virginia law, to provide forensic laboratory services to the Commonwealth’s state and local law enforcement agencies, medical examiners, Commonwealth’s Attorneys, fire departments, and state agencies in the investigation of any criminal matter. By law, DFS provides services to federal investigatory agencies to the extent its resources allow. DFS scientists provide technical assistance and training, evaluate and analyze evidence, interpret results, and provide expert testimony related to the analyses of physical evidence recovered from crime scenes and submitted for examination. More information is available at <https://www.dfs.virginia.gov>.

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, which is part of the Virginia Department of Health, investigates deaths of individuals who died in Virginia from trauma or violence, when sudden and unexpected, while unattended by a physician, under suspicious circumstances or in the custody of law enforcement or other state or local authority. More information is available at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/medical-examiner/>.

The Department of General Services (DGS) helps state public bodies determine the best real estate option to meet both their operational and budgetary needs. The agency also provides laboratory, procurement, construction management, vehicle management, graphic design, engineering, architectural services, mail and surplus property services, as well as Capitol Square facility and grounds operations, security, and maintenance. More information can be found <https://dgs.virginia.gov>.

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